

REV. STEPHEN GANO, M. D.

PASTOR OF THE

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH,

PROVIDENCE, R. I.

FROM 1782 TO 1858.

LIFE AND LABORS

—OF—

REV. STEPHEN GANO, M. D.

Pastor of the
First Baptist Church, Providence, R. I.
From 1792 to 1828.

—BY—

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PRESENT PASTOR.



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REV. STEPHEN GANO, M. D.

A city, a nation or a religious denomination honors itself most, when it honors the men who have enriched its life and ministered to its growth, and keeps their names and their services in grateful remembrance. Recently the citizens of Providence awoke one morning, and were surprised to find that the familiar name of Gano had been obliterated from the street directory. In the carrying out of a plan which had been adopted, of making streets which were a continuation of each other, bear the same name, the historic name, Gano, had been abandoned, and another name had been substituted for it. If the customary and inexpensive policy of perpetuating the memory of founders and benefactors and distinguished public servants by attaching their names to the streets, squares and parks of a city, and thereby familiarizing the inhabitants with its previous history and the men who have helped to make it honorable, is a commendable one, here was a conspicuous violation of that policy. Many of the streets of Providence bear honored names, Williams, Brown, Wickenden, Dexter, Olney, Waterman, Angell, Jenckes, Manning, Messer, Wayland, Snow, Elton, Ives, Doyle, and many others of the earlier and the later generations. The name Gano is not unworthy to appear among them.

It should be said to the credit of the city fathers, that when the facts pertaining to the personal character and distinguished services of Dr. Gano were called to their attention, they at once revoked their act, and replaced his name upon the street which had borne it for many years.

The subject of this sketch was of Huguenot ancestry. The name was originally spelt Gerneaux (not Ganeaux, as stated in Rhode Island Historical Tracts No. 5.) The great-great-grandfather, François Gerneaux, who is spoken of as "a French nobleman," escaped from the Island of Guernsey during the bloody persecution which followed the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, in 1685, an edict which was proclaimed in 1598 by Henry the Fourth, and was several times reaffirmed, under which Protestants throughout

France had a measure of toleration for nearly a century, and was repealed by Louis the Fourteenth, under the influence of the clergy. Then the sleuth hounds of persecution were let loose; thousands of Protestants were sacrificed upon the altar of religious bigotry and hatred, and hundreds of thousands of the best citizens of the country, men of wealth and intelligence, escaped to Switzerland, Holland, England and America. When the persecution began to claim its victims in the Isle of Guernsey, Mr. Gerneaux was secretly informed by the servant of a neighbor, who had been arrested and murdered, that his death had been determined upon, to take place the following night. Being a man of ample means, he purchased a vessel, quietly provisioned it and transferred his family to it, and was himself put on board before midnight in a hogshead. When the sun arose, he was beyond the reach of his cruel persecutors, who comforted themselves in the escape of their victim by the confiscation of his estate. Before taking farewell of his native land, which in its blind zeal for religion was sowing the seed of the bloody harvest of irreligion which ripened a century later in the French Revolution, Mr. Gerneaux touched at several Protestant settlements along the coast, and welcomed on board his vessel those who were ready to accept the offer of deliverance, and try for themselves and their posterity the fortunes of this new world of civil and religious liberty.

The party thus increased crossed the ocean in safety, and founded a new settlement near New York city, which they named New Rochelle, after a French town on the Bay of Biscay, 245 miles southwest from Paris, a town which fell into the hands of the Huguenots in 1557, and remained in their possession until 1628, when we are informed "they surrendered it after a siege of fourteen months, upon honorable terms." This settlement at New Rochelle was one of several settlements by the French Protestant refugees in this country. Others were made in Massachusetts, in Rhode Island, in New York city, on the James River and in South Carolina, and it should be said that uniformly these refugees formed an intelligent, substantial, enterprising and liberty-loving element in the tide of emigration which set towards this land in the seventeenth century. Not a few of their descendants became distinguished as successful merchants, philanthropists and statesmen, and many of them, in the North and in the South, bore a conspicuous and honorable part in the struggle for American independence.

It is said that when Mr. Gerneaux learned that his estate had been confiscated by the authorities of the Church, he remarked: "I have been expelled from my birthplace, and my property has been taken from my family for only one aggression—a love for the Bible and its teachings. Let my name change with changing circumstances." His name was accordingly Anglicized to Gano, and this is the form in which it has come down through his posterity. This first American ancestor lived to the remarkable age of 103 years.

One of the sons of this French refugee, the exact year of whose settlement in New Rochelle it is not possible to ascertain, was named Stephen, possibly having reference to the martyrdom which the father did not suffer, but narrowly escaped. Stephen took to wife Ann Walton, and they are known to have had a large family of children, of whom the oldest was Daniel. The mother is reported to have died at the age of 96 years. Daniel married Sarah, daughter of Nathaniel Britton of Staten Island. They removed to New Jersey and settled in Hopewell, Hunderton county, where several children were born to them; first, Daniel; second, Stephen; third, John; fourth, Nathaniel; fifth, David; sixth, Sarah; seventh, Jane, and eighth, Susanna. The name of the first known ancestor, Francis, reappears in the third generation, and the name of his son, Stephen, recurs twice within the next three generations.

The third child mentioned above, John, was born July 22, 1727, and was the father of Stephen, the subject of this sketch. He was a man of special prominence in his day and in his profession. He was a clergyman, and by a long, faithful and successful ministry he honored his sacred calling. His early years were spent upon a farm, and it was not until some years after he had attained his majority that he was converted, and felt called to preach the Gospel. His father was a devout Presbyterian and his mother a devout Baptist. The mind of the conscientious son was greatly perplexed in determining his own ecclesiastical fellowship. He sought counsel from many quarters. There is an accepted tradition that one of the Tennents, distinguished Presbyterian ministers, with whom he conferred, said to him: "Dear young man, if the devil cannot destroy your soul, he will endeavor to destroy your comfort and usefulness; and therefore, do not be always doubting in this matter. If you cannot think as I do, think for yourself"—wise and wholesome advice from a man who cared more for the mental peace and usefulness of a seeker after truth than he did to win an adherent to his own belief and denomination.

After uniting with the Baptist church in Hopewell, his native place, he soon began to preach as an evangelist, with quite meager preparation, his course of study at "Princeton" under President Burr being interrupted by sickness. Such, however, were his natural gifts that his services were in great demand. He was ordained to the Christian ministry in May, 1754. He made several preaching tours in the Southern states, and attracted ministers as well as large numbers of people to his services. At the delivery of his first sermon in Charleston, S. C., the distinguished preacher, George Whitefield, was one of twelve clergymen in his audience. Benedict, the Baptist historian, says: "John Gano was one of the eminent ministers in his day; in point of talents he was exceeded by few, and as an itinerant he was inferior to none, who ever travelled the United States, unless it were the renowned Whitefield." Mr. Gano was pastor then of a church in North Carolina, and of the church in

Morristown, N. J., for brief periods, and when the First Baptist church in New York was organized in June, 1762, he accepted a call to its pastorate and remained in that office for twenty-six years, a service which was interrupted by the war of the Revolution, during which his people were scattered, and he himself was with the army as chaplain. He served with the troops along the Hudson river, in the interior of New York state, and in New Jersey, at White Plains, Fort Montgomery, Canajoharie, Trenton and Valley Forge, and by his bravery and patriotic zeal as well as by his fidelity to the duties of his sacred office he won the commendation of Washington and other Generals. There is a tradition cherished in the family of Mr. Gano that he administered the rite of baptism to Washington.* By an Act of Congress he was made Brigade Chaplain, his brigade being composed of two New York regiments, one New Jersey and one New England regiment. Such were his courage and patriotic zeal that in times of engagement with the enemy he was not content to remain in the chaplain's place, safely in the rear with the surgeons and the wounded. He seized a musket and sought the firing line, and was wont to lead the men not only in their devotions but in their charges upon the foe. He earned the title of "the fighting chaplain."

During his chaplaincy his family seems to have sought different places of residence. A part of the time, according to the Journal of President Manning, which records a visit to the family, it lived in New Jersey "in a small log house, on a good farm, belonging to a refugee Tory, but much out of repair."

At the close of the war Mr. Gano returned to his church in New York city, or to what remained of it. Of the more than two hundred members when the war broke out, only thirty-seven could be found to resume their fellowship and take up the work which the years of conflict and death had scattered and wasted. Under his ministry, however, increase and prosperity were again enjoyed, and the church became, for that time, large and flourishing. In 1788, having the conviction that his usefulness would be thereby increased, Mr. Gano migrated to Kentucky, and became pastor of a church near Lexington. Here he spent the remainder of his life, and died Aug. 10, 1804, in the seventy-eighth year of his age.

He is said by his biographer to have been "below the middle stature," yet to have had "a presence, manly, open and engaging," "a voice strong and commanding, yet agreeable and capable of all those inflections which are suited to express either the strong or tender emotions of an intelligent mind." He had a clear and positive apprehension of revealed truths. "He felt their power on his own soul, and accordingly, he inculcated and urged them on the minds of his hearers with persuasive eloquence and force." He is described as "a star of the first magnitude in the American

*See Appendix A.

churches," and by reason of his conspicuous ability and catholic spirit, he was highly esteemed and honored by all Christian communions. He was named as one of the Regents of the University of the State of New York, in an act of the legislature passed Nov. 26, 1784, and in an act passed April 13, 1787, reviving the original charter of King's College, under the name of Columbia College, his name appears as the eighth in the list of twenty-nine trustees. It does not appear after March 15, 1788, probably owing to his removal to Kentucky.

The piety of Mr. Gano was introspective, and dealt much with mental exercises, after the manner of his time. It would be characterized today as unnatural and morbid. His favorite hymn, which at his request was sung at his funeral, had for its opening stanza the following lines, which would as little accord with modern taste as express modern religious sentiment:

"Ah! lovely appearance of death,
What sight upon earth is so fair?
Not all the gay pageants that breathe,
Can with a dead body compare!
With solemn delight I survey
The corpse when the spirit is fled,
In love with the beautiful clay,
And longing to lie in its stead."

Yet this old-time preacher served well his God and his generation, and was instrumental in leading a multitude of people to a life of faith, righteousness and patient obedience here as well as to a life of rest and triumph beyond the grave.

His biographers give numerous illustrations of his quickness at repartee, and his remarkable felicity in selecting apt texts for special occasions.

Headley, in his "Chaplains and Clergy of the Revolution," pays a very high tribute to him as a Christian and a patriot. "True to his country, true to his high office, true to his God, he went through the trying scenes of the Revolution, and through life honored, respected and loved by all who knew him, and now sleeps with those whose names are inscribed in the hearts of their countrymen."

Rev. John Gano was twice married. His first wife was Sarah, daughter of John Stites, mayor of Elizabethtown, N. J. Another daughter became the wife of Rev. James Manning, the first president of Rhode Island College. After the decease of his first wife Mr. Gano married in 1793, in North Carolina, the widow of Capt. Thomas Bryant, and daughter of Col. Jonathan Hunt, formerly of New Jersey, and a neighbor and friend of the Gano family. By the first marriage there were ten children, of whom the fourth was Stephen. He was born Dec. 25, 1762, near the beginning of his father's pastorate, in New York city.

Stephen Gano prepared at the request of his children, in 1825, three years before his death, a brief sketch of his early years, to

which we are indebted for the following facts: "Being sent to school quite young, I continued with little or no interruption until the age of thirteen, and, so far as one can judge of his own proficiency, sustained a mediocrity. My dear father directed my early studies toward a college life, but the troubles of the war and other intervening causes prevented my going through a regular classical course, and at the early age of thirteen years I was placed with my maternal uncle (Dr. Stites) for the purpose of a medical education, my father accompanying me to my new abode, Cranberry, N. J."

It was the father's intention that the son should take his college course in Rhode Island College, with his uncle, President Manning. But the breaking up of the College by the war defeated his purpose, and the next best course was adopted. Stephen remained with Dr. Stites four years, gaining such knowledge of the theory and practice of medicine, as his extreme youth and the circumstances would allow. The country was still engaged in the prolonged struggle for independence, with exhausted resources, but with unabated zeal and undiminished confidence in the issue. It appealed to every person who was able to bear arms or render aid in any way. The father had long been serving as chaplain, and from him the son had learned the story of the patient endurance, the patriotic self-denial and the heroic achievements of the American army, and had often heard the names of Webb and Hall, Dubosque, Clinton and Washington, with whom the father was associated, and whom he counted his friends. The young man's heart was fired to participate in the struggle, and render such service as he was able. It was not difficult to gain the mother's consent. She herself provided the young surgeon's necessary equipments, and as she buckled on his regimentals, she said, as reported by him, "My son, may God preserve your life and your patriotism; the one may fall a sacrifice in retaking and preserving the home of your childhood, but never let me hear that you have forfeited the birthright of a freeman!"

In June, 1779, when he was under seventeen years of age, to quote again from his autobiographical sketch, "I was examined by the surgeon-general and received an appointment in Col. Lamb's regiment as surgeon's mate (we would now call it assistant surgeon), and before the year expired the entire charge of the regiment was committed to my care, during which time I experienced great exposures and privations. In one of our marches we might have been traced by the blood on the snow from our feet." His brother Daniel entered the Continental army at the age of fifteen, and rose to the rank of major.

In August of the following year (1780), desiring to see more active service than he was getting, he resigned from the army, and enlisted on the privateer "L'Insurgent." In less than a month she was driven on shore by a British frigate, and he barely escaped

with his life from the wreck. Returning to Philadelphia he enlisted on another vessel, and was again driven back. A third time he enlisted, this time as surgeon on a new brig, called the "St. Patrick," under the command of Capt. Decatur, the father of the distinguished Commodore Decatur. "We sailed," he says, "on a letter of marque to St. Domingo, and on our return passage were chased by a Bermudan, and run on a reef of rocks, which unhung our rudder, and we were taken. Finding escape impossible, we managed to cut away her leaders and nailed our flag to the mast, and long after we were captured, our Stars and Stripes floated over her deck. After our brave and desperate resistance, when we were taken, nature so demanded rest that I rolled myself in a blanket on the deck, and laid myself beside a quiet sleeper, as I supposed, and knew not till I awoke that a dead body had been my companion."

With thirty-three companions he was put on shore on an uninhabited island and left there to perish with hunger and exposure. Some of his companions died. He himself was so weakened by disease and lack of food, that death seemed inevitable. At length they escaped, and came by a small boat to Cape Français, where, weak and emaciated, he was compelled to beg bread from door to door. After ten days he secured passage on an armed brig bound for Philadelphia, but when four days out he was again captured and taken into New Providence, where he was put on board a prison-ship, and endured unspeakable sufferings from hunger and chains and cruelty. The scars of the chains about his ankle he carried until his death.

After weary months of confinement, privation and exposure, of scanty, tainted food and inhuman neglect, during which his hair and his flesh failed him, but not his heart (he was ever afterwards compelled to wear a wig), he was released by exchange of prisoners. To the officer who asked his name, he replied, with pride and much spirit, "My name is Gano; my birthplace New York, where my father was pastor of the only Baptist church until his people were driven from the city by the British, when he became chaplain in our Yankee army. French blood runs in my veins. My mother's milk nourished the spirit of a freeman, and my medical education enables me to know how to treat a captured and wounded enemy." After varied experiences, covering more than two months, he reached home, to the great surprise and joy of the family, for it had been reported that he was one of those who had died on the desolate island from starvation.

His service in the cause of his country continued nearly three years. The young surgeon was now under twenty years of age. When his health was sufficiently restored, he resumed the practice of medicine, and established himself in Tappan, now Orangetown, Rockland County, N. Y. On the 25th of October, 1782, he mar-

ried Cornelia, daughter of Capt. Josiah Vavasour, an officer in the English navy, then residing in New York.

The year following his marriage Dr. Gano turned his thoughts seriously to the matter of his relation to God and to His Son Jesus Christ, whom He sent into the world. The result was that he made open profession of his personal faith in the Saviour, and after prolonged deliberation he abandoned what he had supposed to be his life-profession, and decided to enter the Christian ministry, as was the case with Francis Wayland thirty years later. He was ordained August 2d, 1786, in his father's church, in New York, the First or Gold Street Baptist church, his father, his uncle, President Manning, and other clergymen participating in the service. He labored for a few years along the Hudson river, being pastor at Hillsdale and also at Hudson, and revealing more and more the remarkable pulpit-power which characterized his ministry.

During the winter of 1789-1790, Stephen Gano visited his father in Kentucky, and was active in the formation of the first Baptist church in the great Northwest.* The title "Doctor," by which he was called during his life, and which is now always ascribed to him, was his medical title. He was never made a Doctor of Divinity. He made more or less practical use of his knowledge of medicine during his ministerial life, and was a successful physician to the bodies as well as to the souls of men.

The pulpit of the First Baptist church in Providence became vacant in 1792. President James Manning, who had been the pastor of the church during the twenty years since the Rhode Island College was transferred from Warren to Providence, though not always performing the full duties of the office, died July 29, 1791. Mr. Jonathan Maxcy was ordained as pastor Sept. 8, 1791, and resigned at the expiration of one year, Sept. 8, 1792, to accept the presidency of the College. It is more than possible that Dr. Gano had visited Providence and made the acquaintance of the church during the life of President Manning. At any rate, immediately upon the retirement of Mr. Maxcy from the pastorate, he was invited to take charge of the pulpit, and accepted the invitation.. He became a member of the church July 4, 1793, but for some unknown reason he was not formally elected pastor of the church until March 1, 1796. He was, however, virtually pastor from 1792, residing with his family in the newly erected parsonage which, with the lots, was donated to the church by Nicholas Brown, the generous benefactor of both Church and College, and performing all the duties of the pastoral office.

Dr. Gano was now thirty years of age, in the full vigor of his early manhood, with a tall, stalwart form, unlike his father, being more than six feet in height and well proportioned, with a most impressive presence, whether in the lofty pulpit of the olden time,

*See Appendix B.

or mingling with men in daily intercourse. Although he had not enjoyed even the limited advantages of literary and classical and theological training which the times offered, he had inherited his father's quickness and clearness of thought, aptness and eloquence of speech, and power to move and persuade men, and lead them to decisions in the great matter of personal religion.

The church at the time of his coming, after an existence of 154 years, had 165 members, a small number as churches are rated today, but large for that period. The church occupied a commanding position in the community and in the denomination. For seventeen years it had worshipped in the beautiful and stately edifice which it still occupies, which was erected as much for the uses of the growing College as for its own. Its connection with the College was most intimate. It had in its congregation men of culture and intelligence, men of high commercial standing, of large financial ability and of generous disposition towards the needs of education and religion. Moreover, it was the only Baptist church in Providence or Pawtucket at the time, the Second church (now the Central) in Providence and the First church in Pawtucket being organized in 1805, both of them in the same year.

Dr. Gano's feelings on the first Sunday he preached in Providence and the welcome he received he described in a letter to his wife, who did not accompany him at that time. The letter bears date of Oct. 8, 1792, and has never been published. "Such universal expressions of joy I never received from any society of people before. Oh! my dear, this people have been in a most unhappy case respecting their supplies, and oh! I tremble for this present supply. I assure you, when I see the necessity of abundant labour among them, both in Publick and Private, and consider my own weakness, I shrink. But one, only one, thought bears me up; 'In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.' May this support your weak Friend."

The ministry then begun, in 1792, continued for thirty-six years, until the death of Dr. Gano, August 18, 1828. It was by far the longest ministry that the church has ever enjoyed, certainly since the pastorates of Gregory Dexter and Pardon Tillinghast, the duration of which the records are not sufficient to enable us to determine. And not only by reason of its length, but by reason of its prosperity, Dr. Gano's pastorate was most conspicuous. In no similar period in the church's history have the accessions to it been so numerous. In 1801 forty-seven were added, in 1805, one hundred and thirty-four, in 1806, fifty-two, in 1812, one hundred and four, in 1816, one hundred and fourteen, and in 1820, one hundred and fifty-seven. In that year the total enrolment of the church was 648, a number never exceeded in its history until the year 1901.

It should be remembered that during Dr. Gano's pastorate the church dismissed many members to form other Baptist churches in the city and vicinity, e. g., the Second (now Central); the Third

(now Union); the Fourth, all in Providence; the First, Pawtucket, and the Pawtuxet. In one year thirty-eight members were dismissed, in another, forty-one, and in still another, fifty-six.

The Hon. James Tallmadge, LL.D., who when a student in Brown University resided in Dr. Gano's family, has recorded his impressions of him in these words: "Dr. Gano was admitted on all hands to hold a high rank among the ministers of his denomination. He devoted himself with great assiduity to the duties of his profession. * * * His personal appearance was prepossessing, his voice manly, his articulation distinct, and his diction clear and impressive. His preaching was in turn doctrinal, practical and experimental. His exhortations were often exceedingly earnest and pathetic, and in the application of his discourse, it was not uncommon for a portion of his audience to be melted to tears."

Rev. Henry Jackson, D.D., for many years a prominent pastor in Newport, R. I., whose wife was a daughter of Dr. Gano, in a letter found in Sprague's "Annals of the American Baptist Pulpit," says, "What Henry Clay once said to me of his emotions under the ministry of the elder Gano, at Lexington, Ky., I can affirm of my own under that of the son at Providence: 'He was,' said he, 'a remarkably fervent preacher, and distinguished for a simple and effective manner. And of all the preachers I ever listened to, he made me feel the most that religion was a Divine reality. I never felt so religious under any one's preaching as under his.'" Dr. Jackson says still further: "His voice was full, sonorous, and altogether agreeable. His manner was perfectly artless and unstudied. He had great command of language and could speak with fluency and appropriateness, with little or no preparation. His discourses were eminently experimental, and were adapted to edify Christians, while they abounded in direct and earnest appeals to the careless and ungodly."

Another has said: "He was always courteous without compromising truth, and zealous without bigotry. Of the liberality which arises from indifference to religious sentiment he knew nothing; of that which springs from Christian love, which embraces in spiritual friendship 'all who hold the Head, even Christ,' he possessed an ample measure. Dignified without affectation, and manly without sternness, his meekness most distinguished him, and his gentleness made him great."

Catholicity of spirit among members of different communions is not exclusively a modern virtue, as is sometimes represented. Dr. Gano was distinguished for the breadth of his sympathies and for cordial fellowship with all who honored Christ. Rev. Daniel Waldo, who resided in Greenwich, R. I., from 1815 to 1820, and who knew Dr. Gano intimately, said of him: "Though he was honestly and strongly attached to the peculiarities of the Baptist denomination, he was far from identifying Christianity with those peculiarities, and wherever he recognized the image of the Saviour,

there he acknowledged the claim upon his sympathy and brotherly affection." He also added his remembrance of Dr. Gano's manner in the pulpit. "I well remember that he spoke with one of the most stentorian voices to which I ever listened." It is interesting to notice that a voice that was "manly" to one, and "sonorous" to another, was "stentorian" to a third. Aided by the three descriptive words, we can probably receive an accurate impression. As indicative of the cordial relation which existed between him and pastors of other denominations and the high esteem in which he was held by those not of his church, it is worthy of mention that when Rev. Joseph Snow, the pastor of the Congregational church in Providence, died, on April 10, 1803, Dr. Gano was invited to preach the memorial discourse, and performed the service to the satisfaction of the congregation and family, at whose request it was published.

A life that was lived so openly and so prominently in a community for thirty-six years, could not fail to make an impression of some kind upon those who observed it from day to day. An eminent jurist has given utterance to this impression in these words, "When we consider Dr. Gano's early and surprising developments, having an extensive and very successful medical practice from his seventeenth to his twenty-third year, and his latest still successful efforts in the sacred profession of his better choice, after forty years of active ministration at God's holy altar, we may not feel surprised that the precocious boy only matured the man of no common capacity and acquirements, while his truthfulness, from early life until its close, marked the stamp of his moral worth upon all his intercourse with society; and it was not a solitary expression in courts of justice, where Gano was known by different persons, to vouch for a given statement by saying: 'It is as true as if Dr. Gano had said it.'"

During his long ministry Dr. Gano gave himself without reserve and with great self-forgetfulness to the duties of the pastoral office. If the great object of preaching is to persuade men to accept the truth and mercy of God, and to make moral decisions to the end that they may live godly and peaceable lives, his preaching was eminently successful, and was blessed by God in an unusual degree. His warm, sympathetic nature made him the friend and confidential adviser of the needy and distressed. Like his Master, he had "compassion on the multitude." Rev. Daniel Sharp, D.D., for many years the honored pastor of the Third, subsequently the Charles Street Baptist church, in Boston, and the warm friend of Dr. Gano, referred in the discourse preached at his funeral, to this characteristic of his ministry, and also to his heroic conduct at a time when a fatal scourge, the yellow fever, visited the town. He said: "He was ever ready at the call of the sons and daughters of affliction, although they might be friendless and poor, and dwelling in the obscure retreats of vice and wretchedness. When the pesti-

lence that walketh in darkness and rageth at noonday made desolate many of your dwellings, it can never be forgotten by some of you that he not only administered medicine to the poor who were diseased, but personally tended them, when, through fear, they were forsaken by their neighbors and friends. While living he received the blessing of many who were ready to perish, and now that he is dead we will treasure up the memory of his virtues as a precious legacy designed for our good."

Although Dr. Gano's ministry was one of great prosperity and great popularity, he did not escape all the difficulties and troubles to which ministers are heir. Early in his pastorate in Providence one of his most influential members, for some reason now unknown, was opposed to his remaining, and one morning called at the parsonage to tell the minister what he thought of the situation. The front door was open, and, entering the hall, he found the family at morning worship, and was compelled to listen to Dr. Gano's prayer, as it happened, under the guidance of the divine spirit, first, for himself, that he might have the right spirit and wisdom as to his course, and then for his opposing brother in words so tender and affectionate that the listening brother's heart was melted, his opposition vanished, and when the good doctor rose from his knees, he seized him by the hand, and said, "I'll go heart and hand for you as my pastor."

The difference of opinion in the church which had existed almost from the beginning of its history, in reference to the laying on of hands as a Christian ordinance, to follow baptism, remained with its disturbing and divisive influence. In 1654 a minority who objected to the rite as unscriptural and therefore not obligatory, withdrew and organized another church. In 1771, at the coming of President Manning and Rhode Island College to Providence, the position was reversed and a minority, including the pastor, Samuel Winsor, Jr., strenuously insisting upon the rite, having been outvoted again and again, requested letters of dismission and constituted another church in the town of Johnston, with "the laying on of hands" as an essential belief. Even during President Manning's pastorate persons were not generally received to full membership in the First church without going "under hands," as it was called. And the custom prevailed, not so much as a positive ordinance as a form of receiving new members, until 1808, when Dr. Gano, who had himself been "under hands," as had his father and President Manning before him, became convinced that the form was not authorized in the Scriptures, and should be abandoned. He made known his conviction to the church, informing it that he could no longer perform the service, and in order that the question might be finally settled, he placed his resignation in its hands. After a full discussion it was voted, with but one dissenting voice, not to accept his resignation, and thus a question, which had been an important, if not a burning

question, in the church for one hundred and seventy years, the preponderance of sentiment being now on one side and now on the other, was finally settled, and probably forever. The decision was a remarkable tribute to the influence and popularity of Dr. Gano.

It is said that when Dr. Gano was invited to become pastor of the church, although the vote is reported to have been unanimous, there were some persons who doubted, at least in their hearts, the wisdom of the action, because the new pastor had not received a full collegiate training. The church was closely related to the College. The professors and students would form an important part of the regular congregation. Although for a century and a quarter after the pastorate of Roger Williams, who was a man possessing the training of the English Universities at that time, the church had been instructed and cared for by men who of necessity had been chosen from its own ranks, and had not had the advantages of academic culture, it now breathed the atmosphere and felt the demands of a new environment, and had already acquired a relish for better things. The able and erudite Manning, justly called "one of the brightest ornaments of his denomination," had occupied its pulpit for twenty years, and "had fed it with the finest of the wheat, and with honey out of the rock had satisfied it." The scholarly and brilliant Maxcy, the valedictorian of his class at the age of nineteen, for four years tutor in the College, elected pastor at twenty-three and professor of divinity in the College, chosen president of the College at twenty-four, and at thirty-three honored by a Doctorate of Divinity by Harvard University, whose eloquence, whose learning, the charm of whose person and the greatness of whose attainments have been described by such men as Hon. Tristram Burgess in language which seems well-nigh extravagant, this man had stood as pastor in the pulpit of the church, and was still in the congregation to remind the people of the lofty ideals of preaching and of ministerial leadership. To this pulpit Dr. Gano came, and by his native endowments, which had received only a very limited discipline from the schools, by his fervid eloquence, by his practical wisdom, by his quick spiritual apprehension of revealed truth and its application to the deepest needs of men, educated as well as uneducated, by his studious habits and diligent application, and by his abounding sympathy, simplicity and helpfulness, he removed whatever doubt there may have been in any minds, he won the confidence and esteem of the people in the church and out of it, in the College and in the community, he persuaded hundreds of men and women to an open acceptance of Christ as their Saviour and an entrance upon a life of obedience and righteousness, he led the church forward to a conspicuous success in numbers and in influence, and for the long period of thirty-six years he sustained himself as a good, acceptable, useful and honored minister of Jesus Christ.

Although Dr. Gano was not permitted, as was intended, to become a student of the College, by reason of the breaking out of the

War of the Revolution and the consequent disturbances, he became an earnest friend and supporter of its interests. Rev. John Gano had been a zealous advocate of its establishment, and was a charter trustee. His connection with President Manning by marriage brought them into genuinely fraternal relations. He preached the sermon at his ordination, and was selected to participate in the recognition of the new church and pastor at Warren, R. I., on Nov. 15, 1764. He was appointed by the Philadelphia Baptist Association, to which the College traces its origin, to receive donations for the College, and also, together with Oliver Hart and Francis Pelot of South Carolina, "to address the Baptist associations throughout America, and urge their co-operation in these efforts to raise funds for the College." He received a formal vote of thanks from the Corporation under date of Sept. 8, 1774, for his endeavors in behalf of the College in the Southern colonies, and a request that he "proceed upon the same business in any other places and methods which he shall judge most beneficial towards the advancement of the College." The College has always been most liberal in its spirit in requesting and authorising men "to take and receive subscriptions," to quote from one of its votes, "in any part of the world." The father retained his trusteeship until 1788, when he removed from New York to Kentucky. The son was elected a trustee in 1794, two years after coming to Providence, and remained on the Board until his death. During all these years the College was to him an object of deep and prayerful concern, both as to its material prosperity, for in its early years, especially, the financial problems were often perplexing and difficult to meet, and also as to its loyalty to those evangelical views and principles which the founders of the College regarded as absolutely vital. It is well known that the third president, Rev. Asa Messer, D.D., a man of eminent ability and great excellence of character, was believed by many (and probably not without reason) to hold Arian views of the character and work of Christ, at least during the later years of his administration. Professor Edwards A. Park, D. D., who for many years was the Nestor of the Andover Theological Faculty, was a student in Brown University under President Messer. He thus describes him: "His individuality was made unmistakable by his physical frame. This, while it was above average height, was also in breadth an emblem of the expansiveness of his mental capacity. A 'long head' was vulgarly ascribed to him, but it was breadth that marked his forehead; there was an expressive breadth in his maxillary bones; his broad shoulders were a sign of the weight which he was able to bear; his manner of walking was a noticeable symbol of the reach of his mind; he swung his cane far and wide as he walked, and no observer would doubt that he was an independent man."

In reference to his theological position Professor Park says, "The conflicting rumors with regard to President Messer as a theo-

logian may be explained by supposing that he modified his views as he studied the Unitarian controversy. * * * * It is said by some of his intimate friends that, in his earlier ministry, he believed in the doctrine of a strictly vicarious atonement; but it is said by others yet more intimate, that, if he ever believed this doctrine, he decidedly abandoned it in his later years. During a large, perhaps the larger part of his public life, he probably adopted the Arian view of the person of Christ, and in the main coincided with the General Baptists of England more nearly than with any other denomination of Christians. While he remained President of Brown University, he continued to attend the First Baptist church in Providence, but after he retired from Academic life he attended a Freewill Baptist church. He considered himself a student of theology until the day of his death, and on some points did not pretend to have fully established his opinion. It was therefore a question often discussed, and never fully decided, how far and for how long a time he doubted or disbelieved various doctrines of the evangelical faith."

Dr. Gano was one of the many who honestly believed that the President had departed from the faith of the founders of the College, and from "the faith once delivered to the saints," and that the College was drifting from its early anchorage towards dangerous rocks. In an unpublished letter to Rev. Thomas Baldwin, D. D., for many years pastor of the Second Baptist church in Boston, and an acknowledged prince in his denomination, he wrote: "Could I but see our College in better hands, and not exposed to the deleterious effects of Arianism, my mind would be more at ease. But I desire to leave this, with all my concerns in his all-wise, all-powerful hand, who reigns uncontrolled in heaven and earth. Still I wish to do my duty while I am spared."

It seems that there was some discussion about establishing at Providence the Baptist Theological Institution which was located at Newton, Mass. Dr. Gano wrote to Rev. Dr. Baldwin under date of March 10, 1826 (this letter also unpublished), as follows: "Mr. Brown observed to me a few days since that he had received a line from you on the subject of a Theological Seminary as to its location. I now suggest that I fear my good friend is under the influence of A— M—, D. D., on this subject, who I believe is most heartily opposed to its being located in this town. The reasons must be obvious, although they may not, and will not, be openly offered. The wings of such a gentleman would be clipt by having literary characters, of vital piety and sound in doctrine, to counteract the deleterious influence of those pernicious, unscriptural sentiments which are now held *sub rosa*." President Messer resigned his office that year, honorably concluding that his continuance in it was not consistent or for the best interests of the College. Francis Wayland succeeded him. Dr. Gano was not spared to rejoice in the brightness of the glory of the new administration.

Whatever church President Messer may have attended in his last days, his connection with the First Baptist church was never severed, and he died in its fellowship Oct. 12, 1836.

This theological controversy which was so violent in Massachusetts in the first quarter of the last century, and caused such a cleavage among the Congregational churches, was felt among the churches in Providence. The First Baptist church was considerably disturbed by it, though not many members permanently withdrew from its fellowship. Dr. Gano, again writing to his very dear friend, Rev. Dr. Baldwin, to whom he seems to have unbosomed all his trials (letter written March 22, 1819, and not published), says: "I have delayed writing in expectation of being able to communicate some information more interesting than the rehearsal of former trials; but we remain in very similar circumstances as when I had the pleasure of seeing you. The church meeting which succeeded my visit to Boston was particularly painful. A motion was made by one of the brethren to call a council, which was opposed by a large number of the church, so that the motion was withdrawn, but leaving great soreness on the minds of those brethren who had previously left our communion table. They continued to absent themselves at the next season, and whether it will be possible to conciliate them so as to secure their aid in future is quite uncertain. We are doing all we can to effect this desirable object. I can by no means feel satisfied to exercise discipline towards those who appear so conscientiously opposed to the Arian heresy. I am as much dissatisfied with the error as any brother can be, yet I think they err in judgment as to the time of discipline and also violence of feeling towards those men who (I believe) would be glad to see our ranks broken, and the ship occupied by a new set of mariners."

Under such patient and conciliatory leadership, in great stress of weather, the College was not dashed upon the rocks, and the church was neither foundered in the sea, nor compelled to change its crew, and the next year (1820) was the most prosperous year in all its long history. The crew was augmented by one hundred and fifty-seven accessions, one hundred and forty-seven of them being by profession of faith.

Dr. Gano was especially honored by his fellow citizens in being elected a member of the school committee during almost his entire residence in the city. His period of service continued for thirty-four years, from 1793, the year after his coming to Providence, until 1827, the year before his death, when the state of his health compelled him to relinquish some of his public duties. This uninterrupted service is without a parallel in the history of the School Committee. To him the position was no sinecure. The frequent appearance of his name on sub-committees appointed to consider methods of instruction and rules for the government and discipline of the schools, shows that his connection with the Board was a very active and useful one. In his day the duties of the committee

seem to have been more comprehensive than at the present time, including the oversight of the conduct of the pupils out of school as well as in, and on the first day of the week as well as the other six days. In August, 1806, the following vote was passed: "Whereas, it is represented that some of the Boys belonging to the School 2d District have misbehaved themselves on the Sabbath Day, and that they are guilty of other irregularities, *Resolved, therefore*, that Doct. Stephen Gano, Jabez Bowen and Samuel Bridgham, Esquires, be, and they are hereby appointed a committee to visit said School, and to labor with them as they may deem expedient."

In addition to Dr. Gano's devotion to his Church and the College, and his interest as a public spirited citizen in the education and general welfare of the community, which was proved by the remarkable demonstration of sorrow at the time of his death, he gave his services freely to the wide preaching of the Gospel, to the help of the churches which often sought his aid and counsel, and to the extension of the kingdom of Christ in this land and in all lands. He had inherited from his father a fondness for evangelistic work, and had equal success in it. His missionary journals are preserved, showing how he traveled from place to place, on horseback, or in his own carriage, as did many another preacher of that day, in this State and in other States, where there was much religious destitution, and giving the names of the places he visited, the families which entertained him, the texts which he used, the reception with which he met, and the results of his visits so far as they could be seen and reported. These journeys were often far-reaching. Moreover his reputation as a peace-maker and wise counselor made him a valuable neighbor to churches, whose members were not wholly sanctified, and who would fall into difficulties and misunderstandings. Dr. Sharp, in his Funeral Discourse, said: "His sphere of usefulness, as you well know, was not confined to this society. He preached in most of the States, and the fruits of his labors now exist. In cases of difficulty, his counsels were frequently requested by the churches in the surrounding region, and although he did not seek to have dominion over the faith of others, yet his conciliatory disposition and sound practical views, his integrity and gravity of conduct, gave him a kind of patriarchal influence." Yet he was but sixty-six years of age when he died. Like the apostle Paul he seemed to have "the care of all the churches."

He was honored alike for his ability and attainments and for his usefulness. The College conferred upon him the honorary degree of Master of Arts in 1800, and as a mark of confidence and appreciation he was elected moderator of the Warren Association of Baptist Churches for nineteen consecutive years. His view of the Gospel of Christ, which he preached, was not a narrow and local one, or even national. It was as broad, as far-reaching, as universal as its original charter. To him the arms of the cross of Calvary embraced the world in their meaning and purpose. When his denomination was sum-

moned in the remarkable providence of God, by the conversion of Adoniram Judson and Luther Rice to Baptist views, to organized missionary activity, his heart was among the first to respond. At a called meeting held in Philadelphia in May 1814 for the purpose of forming a Baptist Missionary Convention, to assist in carrying out the final commission of the Founder of Christianity, a meeting composed of thirty-three delegates from eleven different States, both north and south, and from the District of Columbia, at which meeting formal action was taken and the great missionary organization of the Baptists of this country had its origin, Dr. Gano was one of three delegates from New England. The other two were his intimate friend, Rev. Thomas Baldwin, D.D., of Boston, and Rev. Lucius Bolles of Salem, Mass. These three men did more than any others to kindle the missionary zeal of the Baptist Churches in New England. Dr. Gano kindled it so effectively in his own church that it has burned brightly down to the present hour, and has been a distinguishing characteristic of the life of the First Baptist Church in Providence.

Dr. Gano was something of an invalid during several of his last years, but he was able to occupy his pulpit until within about three months of his death. On the 18th of August, 1828, his long and eminently useful and honorable life came to an end, and after a distressing sickness he met his death, not as James Russell Lowell said of a friend, "as a brave man meets his fate," but as a believer in Christ, with a calm and triumphant faith, goes to meet his ascended Saviour.

At the announcement of his death the bells of the town were tolled, and the public schools were dismissed. There are persons still living who distinctly remember the hush that settled down upon the streets and the sad faces of the old and young, as the great concourse of people quietly repaired to the meeting-house on the occasion of the funeral, and listened to the eloquent discourse of Rev. Daniel Sharp, D. D., of Boston, on "The Memory of the Just" (Prov. 10:7). The whole scene was an impressive tribute of affection and respect, by the church and the town, to the beloved pastor and friend, and the distinguished fellow citizen.

The publications of Dr. Gano, so far as known, consist of seven sermons, several of them, perhaps all of them, published by request, viz.:

A sermon on the Death of Washington, 1800.

A sermon before the Grand Lodge of Masons of Rhode Island, 1800.

A sermon at the Ordination of Mr. Joshua Bradley, Newport, 1801.

A sermon at the Funeral of Rev. Gardiner Thurston, Newport, 1802.

A sermon at the Funeral of Rev. Joseph Snow, 1803.

A sermon at the Ordination of Rev. Peter Ludlow, 1823.

A sermon on the Divinity of Christ, 1827.

These sermons, as might be expected, do not exhibit unusual literary excellence or profound thought, but they are thoroughly scriptural, and are characterized by a reverent faith and a fervid spirit. The last one evidently grew out of the theological controversy which was dividing the community at that time.

Dr. Gano was married four times. His first wife, Cornelia Vavasour, died while he was pastor at Hudson, N. Y., having borne to him four children, two sons and two daughters. One daughter, Cornelia V., married Rev. John Holroyd, and the other, Margaret H., married Rev. David Benedict, D. D., the well-known author of the "History of the Baptists." On Aug. 4, 1789, he married Polly, daughter of Colonel James Tallmadge. By this marriage there were also four children, three daughters and one son. Of the daughters Sally S. married Rev. Peter Ludlow, Maria T. married Rev. Henry Jackson, D. D., and Clarissa A. married, first, Newton Robbins, and second, James Ludlow. Dr. Gano's second wife died in Providence in 1797, and on July 18, 1799, he married Mary, daughter of Professor Joseph Brown of Brown University, who was one of the four distinguished brothers, descendants of Chad Brown. She lived but a short time, and left to him one daughter, Eliza B., who married Joseph Rogers, and spent her life of great benevolence in Providence. On the occasion of the funeral of Mrs. Mary Brown Gano, President Maxcy preached an appropriate discourse which has been preserved in print. In 1801, on Oct. 8, Dr. Gano married Mrs. Joanna Latting of Hillsdale, N. Y., who survived him many years. He left no sons, but his descendants through his daughters, and the members of other branches of the Gano family have been numerous and eminently respectable. Some of them, like their first Americanized ancestor, have been distinguished for great longevity. A daughter of Major Daniel Gano, Mrs. Mary Forbes Gano Cobb, is still living in Indiana, at the advanced age of ninety-nine years, and is said to be the oldest surviving Daughter of the Revolution.

The example of Rev. John Gano in joining the tide of emigration westward was followed by other members of the family, who became the pioneers of new settlements, and with their numerous descendants have largely assisted in the development and prosperity of the great middle west. The name, Gano, has quite disappeared in New England, except as it is retained in a few instances as a middle name, expressive of relationship or of respect for the subject of this sketch, who made the name honorable in Providence by his service in the cause of truth and humanity for more than a third of a century, now seventy-five years ago.

APPENDIX A.

The following statement, from the pen of Gen. Richard M. Gano, a great-grandson of Rev. John Gano, was published in the "Witness of the Spirit," p. 205, in 1902. Gen. Gano commanded a brigade in the Confederate army, and after the war entered the Christian ministry. He now resides in Dallas, Tex. This statement presents the tradition as it has been uniformly held in all branches of the family. The present pastor of the First Baptist church in New York, Rev. I. M. Haldeman, D. D., in a personal letter dated Nov. 10, 1902, says: "For myself I fully believe the baptism took place. Some years ago I met a descendant of Pastor Gano, and he told me that it was a tradition in the family that he had baptized General Washington, and that none of the family had ever raised any doubt about it. In public addresses and lectures I have spoken of it as a fact."

IMMERSION OF WASHINGTON.

"With reference to the immersion of General Washington by my great grandfather, John Gano, so many inquiries have been made of me by letter that I think it best to publish a brief statement of what I know of the matter, or, rather, all I have heard about it. Many persons are disposed to doubt the statement (no doubt honestly), because no publication was made of it in history. John Gano was a Baptist minister, and established the First Baptist church in New York city. The old church has been supplanted by business houses, but another Baptist church building was erected farther up in the city, in which are preserved the old records, in which a very high compliment was paid by General Washington to Chaplain Gano for his courage while encouraging the troops in a very severe conflict. General Washington on one occasion said to Chaplain Gano: 'I am convinced that immersion

is the baptism taught in the Scriptures, and I demand baptism at your hands.' He said he wanted no parade made over it, and so, quietly, in the presence of some forty-two witnesses, he led him down into the water and buried him with Christ, and raised him up in the likeness of his resurrection.

"The parties from whom I received my information have all crossed over the river. My father, John A. Gano, named for his grandfather, who did the immersing, I often heard speak of it. He was a minister of the Church of Christ. His brother, Stephen F. Gano, now living at Georgetown, Ky., I have also heard relate the circumstance, and my father's older sisters, Mrs. Mary Buckner and Mrs. Margaret Ewing, I have heard tell the facts. The oldest conversed with her grandfather, who immersed Gen. Washington. Old Uncle Daniel Gano, of Scott County, Ky., who was the oldest son of John Gano (the immerser of Washington), died in Kentucky about 1842. He was a lieutenant of artillery in the Revolution, when his father was chaplain. He was born about 1750, and died at the age of about 92. I visited his house, and talked with him. He was in the army and an officer of artillery at the time of the baptism, and knew all the circumstances. I being only twelve years old at the time, have forgotten whether he was an eye-witness of the immersion or not. An old Baptist minister from Virginia visited my father's house in Kentucky when I was a boy, and told the circumstances of Washington's baptism. I have forgotten his name, but Dr. S. F. Gano of Georgetown, Ky., could tell it. I was in Corsicana, Texas, one day, several years ago, and in the law office of Richard Bealle I spoke of it, and Mr. Bealle said he had an older brother in Virginia, a Baptist minister; he had often heard him tell the circumstances of Elder Gano baptizing General Washington, and that the tradition had been handed down in their family. I suppose the reason it was not published was that the baptism was hardly in perfect accord with Baptist usage, as there was no Baptist church organization in the army, and the Episcopal church, of which Washington was a member, never published it. R. M. GANO, Dallas."

It is not necessary to raise the much-discussed question whether Washington was a communicant in the Episcopal church or not. As against the tradition so fondly cherished by the Gano family that Washington received baptism at the hands of their ancestor, the negative testimony is very strong. There is no historic record of the fact. In the Memoirs of Rev. John Gano, edited by his son, Stephen, in which there is a detailed account of his experience in the Revolutionary army, there is no reference to any such baptism, as it would naturally be expected there would be, if it had occurred. Moreover, in the Discourse on President Washington, preached after his death by Rev. Stephen Gano, there is a like omission.

APPENDIX B.

The following account of the formation of the First Baptist church in Cincinnati has been taken from records in the Historical Society in that city:

"The first Baptist church in Ohio was constituted by the aid of Rev. Stephen Gano, afterwards of Providence, R. I., on the 20th of January, 1790,* at the house of Benjamin Davis, in Columbia, five miles above the present site of Cincinnati. This was on Saturday, and immediately after the organization, the church then consisted of nine persons, viz.: Benjamin Davis, Mary Davis, Isaac Ferris, Jonah Reynolds, Elizabeth Ferris, Amy Reynolds, John Ferris, John S. Gano and Thomas C. Wade, Isaac Ferris was appointed deacon, and John S. Gano clerk. The door of the church was then opened, and Elijah Stites, Rhoda Stites and Sarah Ferris were received on experience, and baptized by Dr. Gano on the next day. Thomas Sloo, a member of Dr. Gano's church of New York city, and who had come out to the West with Dr. Stephen Gano, was present. Both Mr Sloo and Dr. John Gano afterward moved to Kentucky. Soon after three others, Mrs. Meek, Smith and Bailey, united by letter, and thus the first Baptist church in the Northwestern Territory commenced with the above twelve members. On the 24th of January, 1790,* at a called meeting, they gave a unanimous invitation to Rev. Stephen Gano to become their pastor. But this he declined. Dr. Stephen Gano was a brother of John S. Gano before named, and through whose influence it was hoped he would accept, and come West to live near his brother."

*"These dates are given on the authority of a diary kept by Dr. William Goforth, one of the first settlers of Columbia, and were furnished by his daughter, Mrs. Mary Gano, widow of John S. Gano, one of the first members of the church at Columbia. Mrs. Gano is still living and active, May 1857. But Dr. Ezra Ferris, of Laurenceburg, Indiana, lately deceased, and who was present at the organization of the church, is positive it took place the last Saturday in March, 1790."